

# *Sketch*

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## A Sponge Filled With Vinegar

Richard N. Mason\*

\*Iowa State College

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## A Sponge Filled With Vinegar

*Richard N. Mason*

Sci. Sr.

So you would reach yet not quite grasp,  
So you would spread long creeping fingers to the sea like a mighty  
river feeling for something.

So you would touch the mountain's top,  
And leave your heel marks on the snow.  
You would span beyond the curve of earth,  
But yet you stop upon the sand and wait—  
You wait and gaze upon the water.

You are sons of revolution—  
You smell gunsmoke heavy in the air.  
Somewhere westward the pine tree whispers sibilantly of peace—  
You reach and stretch to be away,  
Out of sight of your neighbor's chimney,  
Out of sound of your neighbor's cry.  
You flow down winding rivers,  
You pour through the Cumberland Gap and spread fanwise into  
green Kentucky,  
And pull your wagons over billowy Tennessee.  
You float through seas of waist-high grass.  
You scratch trails across the Rockies.  
You gaze in wonder at Yellowstone and great Salt Lake.  
You force your way over sharp cutting Sierras.

You stare at the bright Pacific—but where are these pines of peaceful whispers?

You men who love the Indian names of Dakota, Illinois, Iowa and Minnesota,

You are men of mind and matter.

You nurture on the breast of liberty.

You want no tyrant's will of mind.

You plant trees of learning on the prairie sod.

You hollow out a new culture in the low place the Indians called Buffalo Wallow.

You rear your heads and breathe deep the quiet of a starlight night.

You prop no fence to heap the free, drifting snow.

You live and let live—

Yet you stand and gaze upon the water.

The railroads have bound you in strips of new-forged steel.

You have no freedom now.

And you, Redman,

You skimmed the river and the lakes in birchbark.

Your padded feet turned no forest leaf.

And now, Redman, look up from your dirty camp.

Look up from your souvenir stands.

Look up from the sack of groceries you have begged from the Great White Father.

You too have reached the sands—

You stand and gaze upon the skyblue water.

And you, Blackman, nigger, slave—

You are whipped and whining and crawling.

You came in Dutch ships,

Bought by Puritan money,

Traded for blackstrap molasses

To be boiled into rum.

From this cauldron of hypocrisy,

You chant and you pray to God

With easy fervor and quick forgetting.

You laugh and sing and fight.

You are beaten in your squalor.

You like it there—there you'll stay.

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The line is drawn across your face—  
The line where shore meets water,  
And you stand and gaze upon the black water.

And you Okies, Dusties, men of misfortune,  
You go west and south and north and east.  
Sons of misfortune, you breed misfortune.  
The landed men hear your cry.  
You settle like flies on their neat, white tables.  
You are as dry and as arid as your acres.  
You are brittle and cracked.  
You would drink, now that you have reached the sands,  
But you too stand and gaze upon the water.

What have you done, men?  
What blackness is in your souls?  
What brings you to the water?  
Staring thirstily, with cracked and bleeding lips,  
Gazing with dry and puffy tongues,  
You stand and gaze upon the water.

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## The Last Crumb

*Edward C. Easton*

Sci. Sr.

**B**Y THE feeble glow of a half-burned-out flashlight Old Carl carefully searched the empty coal shed. Sweeping the dry floor with a broom, he collected a small pile of dust, scooped it into the battered coal pail, and returned with it to his shack.

The night was cold and silent. Not even the slightest breeze whispered in the towering tamaracks. A tiny feather of smoke rising perpendicularly from the chimney shone white against the star-specked sky. With his little pile of dust, Old Carl entered the shack, shoving the old rag carpet tight against the door sill as he closed the door.

A few small embers still glowed in the warped old laundry stove, and when he scattered the dust over them a tiny flame burst out where each coal had been. Old Carl watched the few tiny flames burn bravely and then give way to smouldering, heatless embers. Breaking the old broom over his knee, he fed